



Town of Fairfield • Registrar of Voters Office
611 Old Post Road, Fairfield, Connecticut 06824

Testimony of Matthew Waggner, Registrar
(203) 256-3115 | mwaggner@town.fairfield.ct.us

SB 384 – An Act Concerning the Number of Polling Places and Moderators for Primaries

This bill contains two provisions: it allows Registrars to reduce the number of polling places in a primary, and to use only a single certified Moderator when two primaries occur on the same day.

Concerning a reduction of polling places, Registrars must balance financial and organizational considerations against the cost of voter confusion when changing a polling place. In my view, the balance should weigh heavily in favor of consistency for voters.

I would ask this committee to consider whether the provisions already in place to allow consolidation of polling places – contained in Sec. 9-168a – would accommodate the needs of most towns. The text of this statute, with emphasis added, is attached to this testimony. It appears that these provisions would cover a broad array of situations, and with state and local redistricting to commence later this year, towns with a particular desire to find cost savings in primaries have an opportunity to select their polling places to be more readily consolidated without repeatedly changing polling places for their local voters.

I would also like to bring two technical concerns to your attention.

You should be aware that the deadline proposed by SB 384 for designating polling places in a primary – ninety days in advance of the primary date – is thirteen days before the deadline for a nominating convention for state and district office, and twenty-seven days before the deadline for primary petitions to be submitted. This would create a difficult situation in which towns would have to designate a reduced number of polling places before knowing which offices would be subject to primary, or in fact if there was going to be a primary at all.

Finally, my office became aware of a counter-intuitive requirement of our statutes last year, when petitions for a local question were certified such that the referendum was to be held the same week as the 2010 primaries for Governor. However, current statute provides only for two *primaries* to be held in the same polling place: if our Board of Selectmen chose to schedule the referendum on primary day, we would have been required to hold the referendum in different locations, with entirely different staff.

I support the provision allowing offices to use the same moderator for two simultaneous primaries, but would ask that the committee consider abstracting this concept to allow for one moderator to oversee *multiple election events* held in the same voting district, and to permit referenda and other election events to be held in the same physical location as primaries held on the same date.

Sec. 9-168a. Polling places for voting districts whose lines differ from the district lines as constituted in a municipal election year and for voting districts with less than one thousand five hundred electors who vote for officers that no other electors of town vote for. Combined voting districts and polling places.

(a) Any provision of the general statutes to the contrary notwithstanding, in any municipality in which, at any election, or primary, as a result of the assembly, senatorial or congressional district lines in effect, there is a voting district or a part of a voting district which differs geographically from the district lines as constituted in a municipal election year, the registrars of voters may either provide a suitable polling place therein or may, in lieu thereof, with the approval of the legislative body of the municipality, provide separate voting machines in the polling place of another voting district in said municipality for use by such electors. The registrars of voters shall determine which polling place officials are necessary for such separate machines and shall provide the procedure to ensure that the electors use the proper voting machine, which procedure may include the registrars of voters prescribing and providing receipts.

(b) Any provision of the general statutes to the contrary notwithstanding, in any municipality in which, at any election or primary, as a result of the assembly, senatorial or congressional district lines in effect, there is a voting district with less than one thousand five hundred electors who vote for a combination of officers that no other electors of the town vote for, the registrars of voters may either provide a suitable polling place therein or may, in lieu thereof, provide separate voting machines in the polling place of another voting district in said municipality for use by such electors. If the registrars of voters provide separate voting machines in the polling place of another voting district, they shall determine which polling place officials are necessary for the district containing less than one thousand five hundred electors and shall provide the procedure to ensure that the electors use the proper voting machines, which procedure may include the registrars of voters prescribing and providing receipts.

(c) In any election or primary where electors in more than one voting district vote in the same building and vote for all the same officers, and the law does not require separate returns, the registrars of voters may combine the voting districts and polling places into one voting district and polling place, with or without integrating the voting districts on the check lists used at the election or primary. The registrars of voters shall file a statement of their action with the town clerk before the election or primary and the town clerk shall label the polling place return form to show which districts are combined on such return.